Film Terms

Shot—The basic building block of film narrative. It refers to a single, constant take made by a camera without cuts.

Cut—An abrupt or sudden change in the camera angle, location, or time, from one shot to another. Cutting refers to the selection, splicing, and assembly of the film editor.

Scene—Usually a shot or series of shots that together comprise a single, complete, and unified dramatic event or action (much like a scene in a play).

Frame—Refers to the rectangular area within which the film image is composed by the film-maker.

Establishing Shot—Usually a long shot at the beginning of a scene that is to provide the audience with an overview to orient the locale or time for the scene and action that follows.

Close-up—A shot taken from a close distance to fill the entire screen in order to focus attention and emphasize importance. Often used to show facial expression.

Medium Shot—Refers to a conventional camera shot filmed from a medium distance. It usually refers to a human figure from the waist up. Clearly shows body language.

Long Shot—A camera view of an object or character from a considerable distance so that it appears relatively small in the frame.

Long Take—A shot of lengthy duration (without any cuts).

Dialogue—The spoken lines in a film by an actor/actress.

Voice Over Narration—Refers to recorded dialogue, usually narration, that comes from an unseen, off-screen voice, character, or narrator, that can be heard by the audience but not by the film characters.

Source: filmsite.org